



EDUCATION at the NHMFL

Adapting to a Changing Educational Climate

After a spring retreat and outside evaluation, the Center for Integrating Research and Learning (CIRL) has taken a long hard look at its programs, outreach offerings, and plans for the future. The following mission statement resulted:

To expand scientific literacy and to encourage the pursuit of scientific studies among educators and students of all ages through connections between the NHMFL and the National Science Foundation, the community of Tallahassee, the State of Florida, and the nation.

In addition, Center staff identified the following areas of focus that will drive future programs: (1) K12 initiatives in science education; (2) undergraduate and graduate experiences in science and science education; (3) professional development in science teaching; (4) general public science awareness; (5) science curriculum development and training; (6) partnerships; and (7) continuous feedback and improvement.

Research Experiences for Undergraduates and Research Experiences for Teachers programs concluded successfully (see *NHMFL Reports*, Volume 10 (3), 2003) with all student and teacher presentations available on our Web sites: <http://reu.magnet.fsu.edu> and <http://ret.magnet.fsu.edu>. In addition, 42 teachers were provided with quality professional development this summer through two 4-day summer institutes. Teachers who participate become ambassadors for the NHMFL and for inquiry-based hands-on classroom science. Teachers working with Center educators, in consultation with Leon County Schools, created a content-rich series of activities for middle and high school teachers and students. Materials can be checked out from the Center and teachers can earn continuing education recertification credits. The new program will be pilot-tested this academic year with an eye to marketing the materials to other counties in Florida.

The Center continues university partnerships by providing experiences for Florida State's First Year Experience; Bryan Hall Learning Community; Women in Math, Science, and Engineering; and the Office of Science Teaching Activities. In partnership with Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University's Center for Equity, Center educators maintain a pilot "Girls in Science" program. The Center continues its longstanding community outreach, having recently initiated a "Science for Kids" night at Borders Bookstore. In addition, through a new partnership with The Boys and Girls Clubs of America, the NHMFL provides science instruction, hands-on activities, and tours of the facility to K12 students from surrounding counties that are designated as underserved and with student populations that are typically underrepresented in the sciences.

Redesign has begun on the education Web site (<http://education.magnet.fsu.edu>) to better reflect the Center's mission. The updated and expanded Web site will include features such as *Book of the Month* for parents and students, *Teacher and Student Resources*, *Student Support for Science Fair Projects*, and newly created activities for students to do at home with their parents. In the face of school district and state budget cuts, the Center and its committed group of educators are dedicated to bringing more and better science experiences to teachers, students, parents, and the general public. Through the Center's programs, thousands of students each year experience the excitement of real world science, teachers become more involved in science instruction and creation of challenging activities for their students, and the NHMFL is seen as a vital, dynamic resource for quality educational programs.

For further information about the NHMFL Center for Integrating Research and Learning, contact the program director, Dr. Pat Dixon, pdixon@magnet.fsu.edu, 850-644-4707.